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Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath

This is the time for **Back to Basics**,
basics that have formed the essence of our culture,
basics that provided the impetus to our Independence
Movement, basics that have built a modern, self-reliant
and self-confident India over the past half century.

A time to reestablish the core values
that have made India unique.

A time to rejoice in our diversities and reiterate our unities.

A time to reestablish the rule of law
and repair our secular fabric.

A time to revive economic growth.

A time to reinforce social justice and equity.

A time to reinvigorate agriculture.

A time to recharge the aspirations of our youth and women.

A time to reinject clarity and consistency in governance.

A time to rekindle the flame of all-inclusive,
composite, pluralistic nationalism.

A time to reject the forces of bigotry and divisiveness.

A time to reinvent the politics as an instrument
of social change based on conscience, competence,
compassion and commitment.

The 2004 Lok Sabha elections is no ordinary election.
It is not just an election between one party and another.

It is a clash of sharply competing values,
of diametrically opposite ideologies.

It is a contest between the Congress that has always
celebrated India's glorious past and drawn from its traditions
to build modern India, and the BJP that is systematically
undermining the very essence of Indian civilization
and destroying the very idea of India.

The Congress recognises that this is not a moment for a
narrow pursuit of partisan power. This is the moment
to consolidate all forces subscribing to the fundamental

THE KEY ISSUE

values of our Constitution. The Congress's
goal is to defeat the forces of obscurantism and
bigotry who contributed nothing to the Freedom
Movement or the making of our Constitution and
whose sole objective is to subvert our millennial
heritage and composite nationhood. In this sacred
endeavour, the Congress has joined hands with
like-minded political parties in different states.

The Congress and its various allies are
united in their determination to defeat the BJP,
which threatens to rewrite our past and
wreck our future. In the process, we will present
the national alternative to bring India back on the path
of economic growth with social harmony.



Building one of the world's largest textile industries.

Creating our magnificent Constitution.

The achievements of successive Congress governments are indelibly marked on the contemporary face of our country. The RSS-BJP combine has never missed an opportunity to ridicule, distort and misinterpret everything that the Congress party has done.

It is the Congress that fought for and won India's freedom. It was the forebears of the BJP in the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS rejected Mahatma Gandhi's call, "Kareenge ya Mareenge" with which he launched the Quit India Movement. It is Congress leaders like Gandhiji, Indiraji and Rajivji who have sacrificed their lives in the service of the country.

It is the Congress that was responsible for establishing and nurturing parliamentary democracy. It was the Congress that made our Constitution possible, a national charter for radical but peaceful socio-economic transformation. It is the Congress that spearheaded social reforms to give dignity to those who were discriminated for centuries. It is the Congress that has preserved and protected the political unity and sovereignty of India.

It is the Congress that created the public sector to industrialise India and make it self-reliant, to take it to new heights of technological progress, to

develop backward regions and provide employment to crores of Indians, particularly dalits and adivasis.

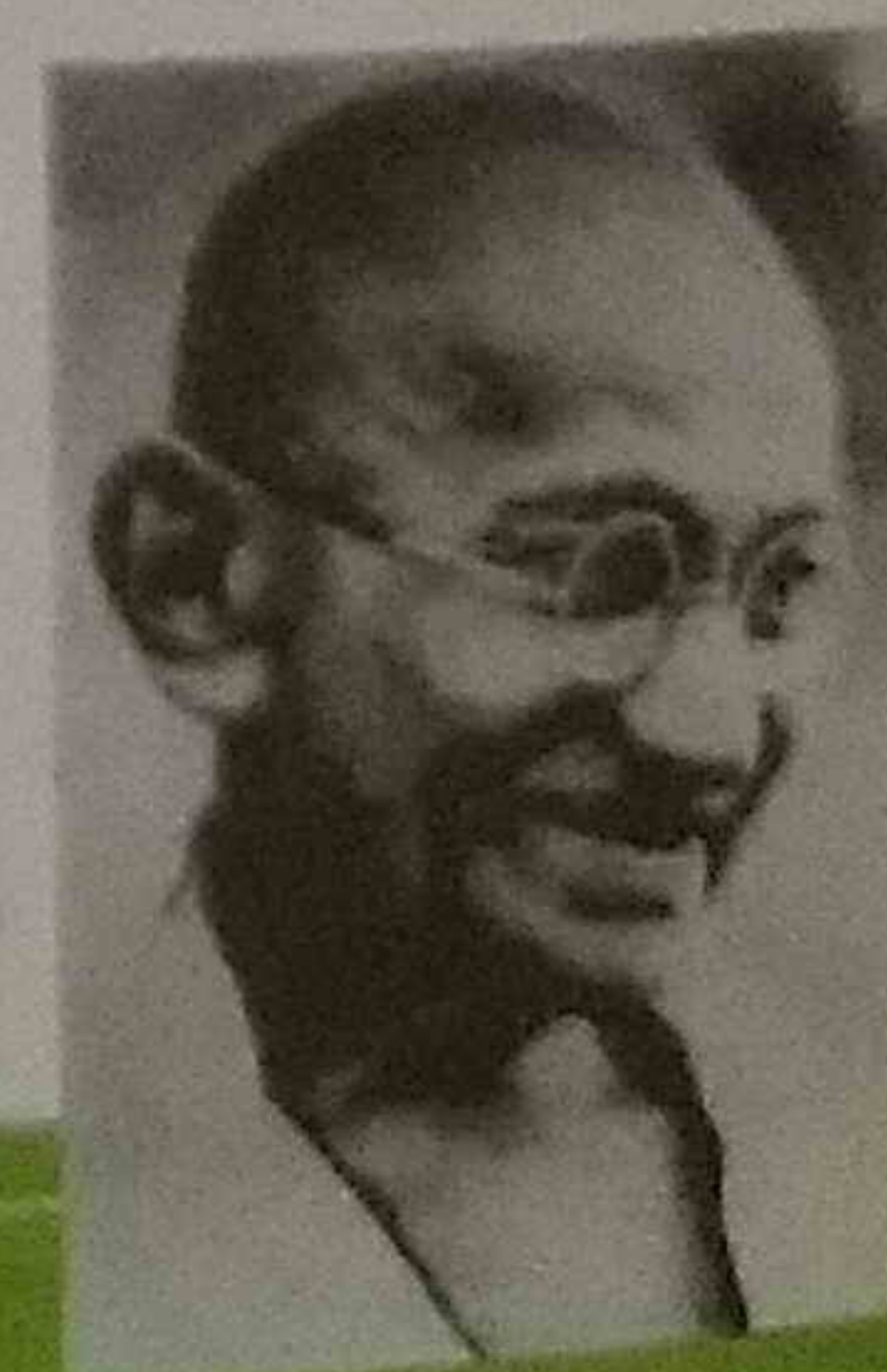
It is the Congress that abolished zamindari and ushered in land reforms. It is the Congress that launched the Green Revolution and engendered the White Revolution bringing new prosperity to our kisans and khet mazdoors and making India the largest milk producer in the world.

OVERVIEW OF CONGRESS

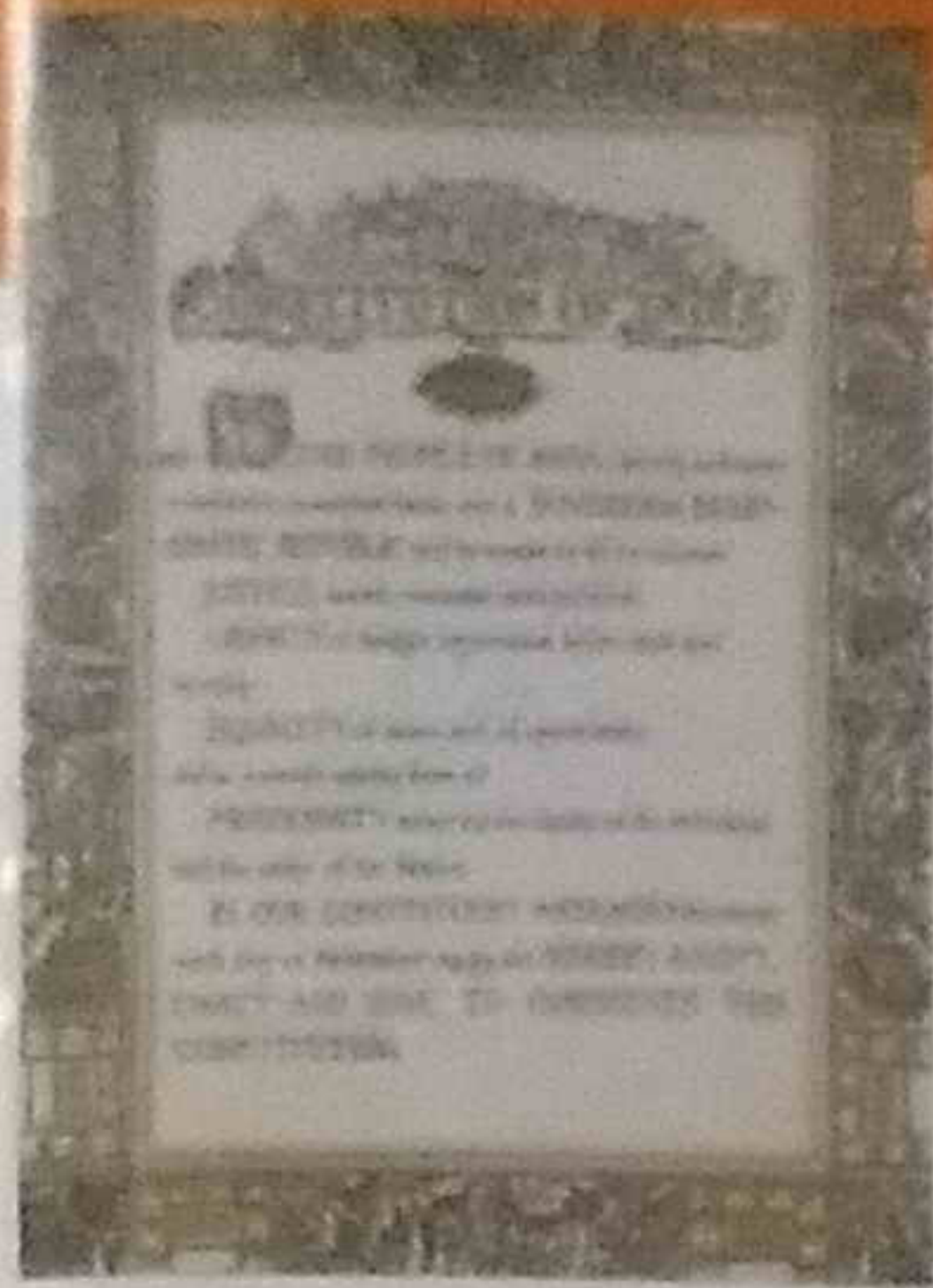
It is the Congress that promoted the scientific spirit and established the infrastructure and institutions that have made India a major nuclear, space and missile power, and a global leader in Information Technology (IT). India could test its nuclear weapons in May 1998 only because of the foundations laid by the Congress. Missiles like Agni are the legacy of the Congress. Satellites like INSAT are the legacy of the Congress.



Establishing world-renowned institutes like IITs and IIMs.



A party built by the Father of the Nation.



Turning India
into a leading
industrial power.



It is the Congress that launched extensive anti-poverty and rural development programmes that have helped alleviate the distress of the most disadvantaged and deprived sections of our society and made a massive dent on rural poverty. A nation which had two-thirds of its people under the poverty line at Independence is now a nation with two-thirds of its population above the poverty line in the half century since Independence. The middle class of India is the proud creation

development through grassroots democracy in our villages and mohallas. It is the Congress that conceived and pushed through the Constitutional amendments relating to Panchayati Raj and the Municipalities.

It is the Congress that introduced and enacted extensive labour legislation to give workers in the organised sector and contract labour fair and remunerative wages and job security. It is the Congress that began the process of extending social security to the 93 per cent work force that subsists in the unorganized sector.

It is the Congress that pioneered the revolution in higher and technical education that has now rendered the Indian brain the most highly valued commodity in the world. It is the Congress that established the IITs, the

IIMs and the RECs and that established the vast network of research laboratories.

It is the Congress that launched liberalization and economic reforms. It is the Congress's policies that made India the world's fourth largest economy by 1998.

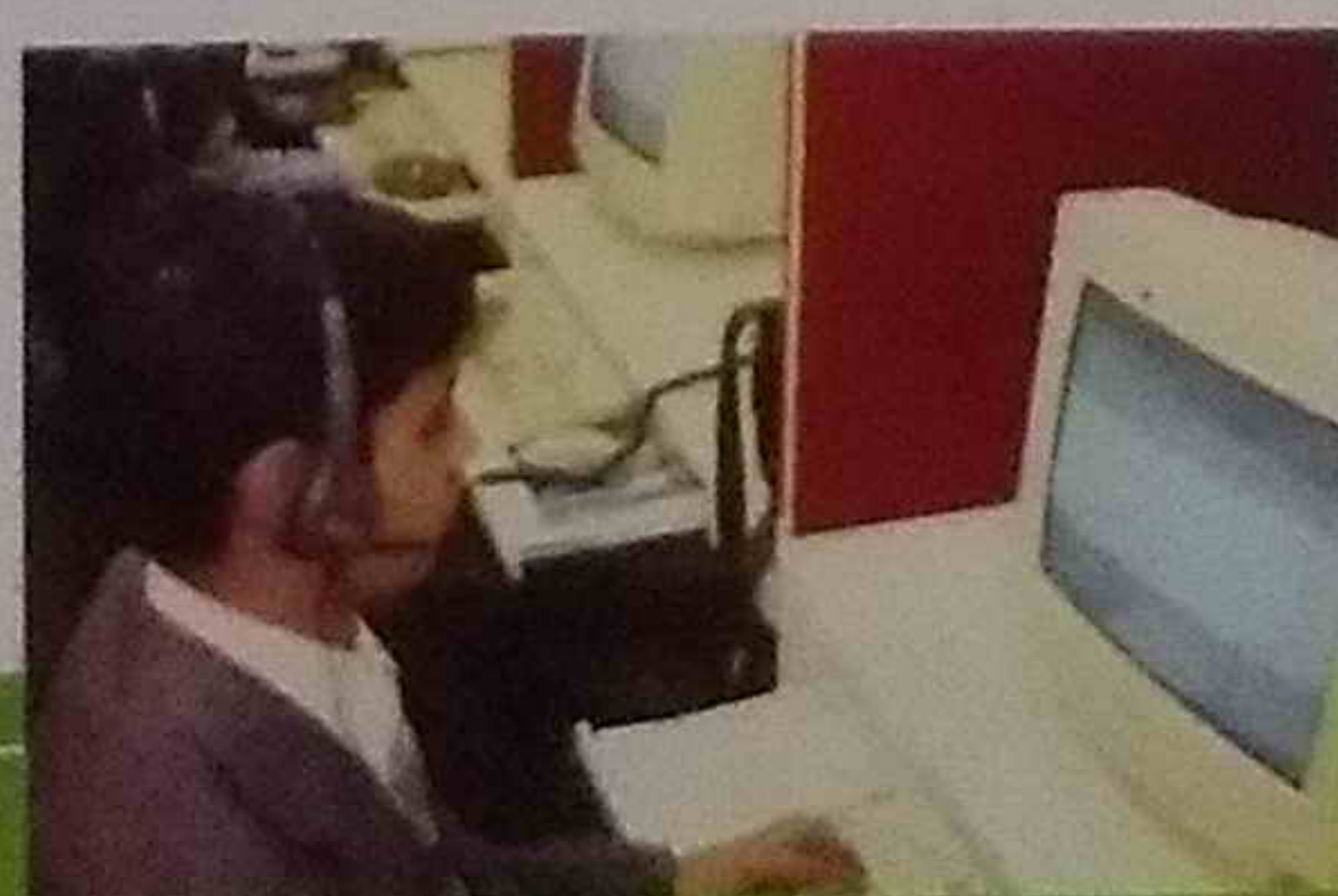
Above all, it is the Congress that has maintained India's unity while celebrating her many diversities.

OF 45 YEARS ACHIEVEMENTS

of the Congress.

It is the Congress that empowered scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes through reservations and through social welfare and economic development programmes for their welfare and well-being.

It is the Congress, responding to Mahatma Gandhi's call for *Poorna Swaraj* through *Gram Swaraj*, that promoted grassroots



Using IT to bring
the nation closer.



Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath

There are five main reasons why the Congress remains unique among all political parties in India.

First, the Congress is the only all-India party in the country, the only national political force with a presence in each and every region of this vast country. Whether in power or out, the Congress is a visible and tangible political force in villages, towns and cities all across India.

Second, the Congress is the only political party that derives its strength and support from, and appeals to, each and every section of our variegated society. It is the only political party that has provided for reservations in its organization for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, OBCs, minorities and women.

Third, the Congress is the only party whose philosophy of governance is rooted in democratic values, combining sustainable economic growth with social justice, and marrying economic liberalization to social liberalism. The Congress way is the way of dialogue, not discord. The Congress way is the way of accommodation, not acrimony.

Fourth, the Congress is the only party whose philosophy of governance is based on a strong centre working purposefully with strong states and with empowered local self-government institutions. Rajniti Se Lok Niti, Gram Sabha Se

Lok Sabha remains its objective.

Fifth, the Congress has always been a party of youth. It respects age and seniority but youthful energy and dynamism has always been its hallmark. In 1989, it was Rajiv Gandhi who reduced the voting age to 18. It was Rajiv Gandhi who declared Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary on January 12th as National Youth Day. It was also he who expanded



the network of Nehru Yuvak Kendras to cover all the districts of the country.

The Congress has always been more a broad national movement than a mere political party in the conventional sense of the term. For 118 years, it has provided an unusually broad platform for people from diverse social backgrounds to come together in the service of the country. The Congress embodies the idea

of India like no other party does.

For the Congress, Indian nationalism is all-inclusive and cosmopolitan, a nationalism that draws creatively from every facet of India's rich and variegated heritage, a nationalism that is not narrow or bigoted but celebrates the contribution made to our composite culture by each of the religions of the land. It is a nationalism that has an equal and dignified place

sustained assault in the past few years. For the Congress, secularism means full freedom and respect for all religions. It means equal opportunities for followers of all religions and no discrimination on the grounds of religion. Most of all, it means firm opposition to communalism of all kinds.

The misuse of any religion to spread hate and discord in our society is communalism. The

misuse of religion to incite popular passions to ignite mutual antagonisms is communalism. Most Indians are religious. At the same time, most Indians are respectful of other faiths. Most Indians want to live with all other Indians, whatever their religion, in harmony and goodwill. But a handful of Indians have become self-appointed guardians of their own faiths. It is they who seek to destroy social peace. It is they who want us to be prisoners of a distorted past, invented and misinterpreted by them to stoke envy and jealousy and hatred

between communities.

This is the real battleground for secularism. It is more than a majority-minority issue. It is actually a struggle between those who wish to preserve the essence of all religions and those who seek to deliberately distort that essence to undermine our composite nationhood for unacceptable ideological reasons and partisan electoral ends.

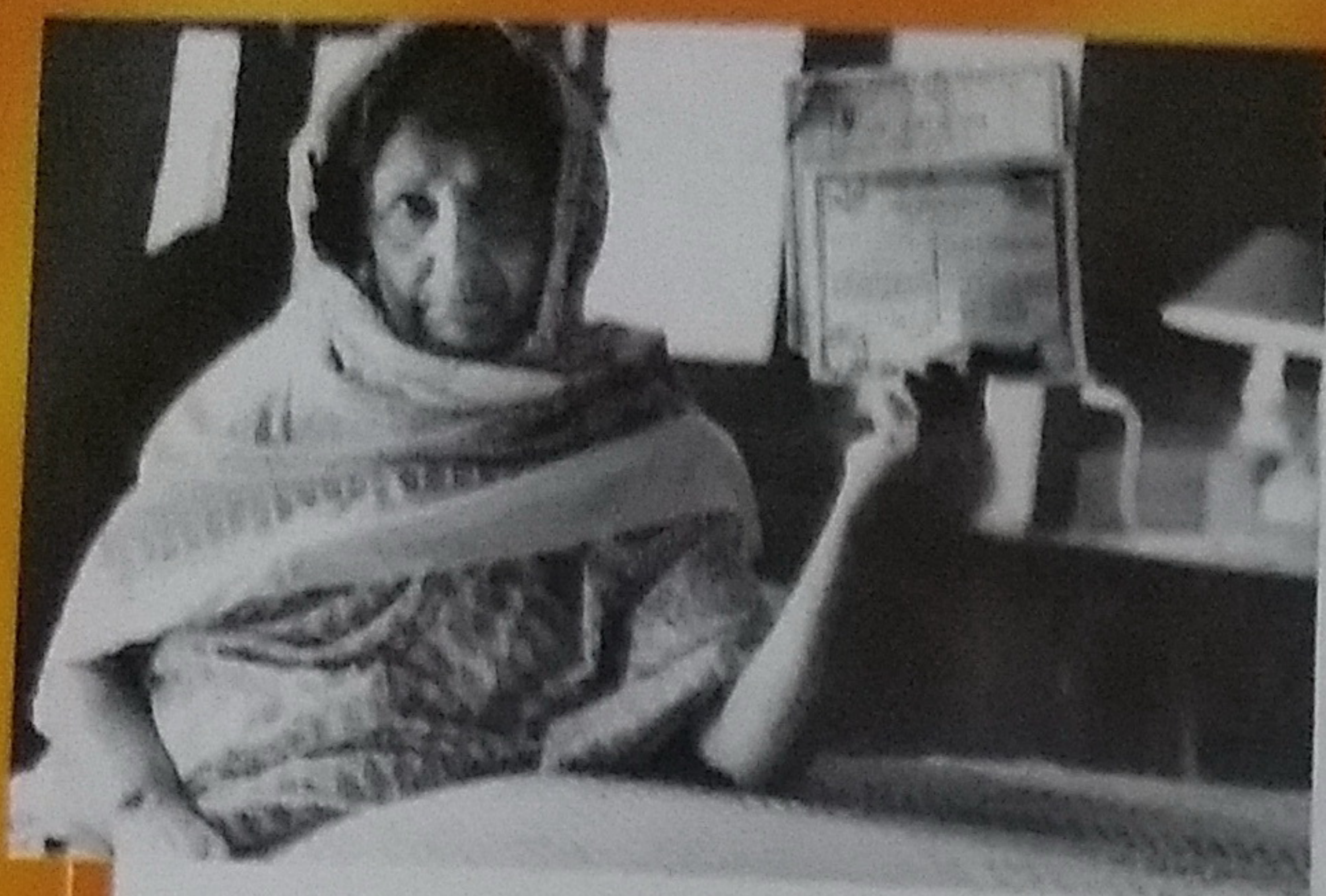
for everything Indian and for each and every Indian. It is a nationalism that integrates India emotionally. The BJP's "cultural nationalism" is a device for dividing Indians emotionally. The Congress unites the Indian nation through consensus; the BJP divides the Indian nation through confrontation.

The Congress is deeply concerned that secularism has come under the most severe and

WHY CONGRESS AGAIN?



Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath



In the last five years at the centre, the BJP-led NDA government has

- **massively increased unemployment** by economic policies that have
 - ▶ thrown lakhs of workers out of employment in agriculture, the handlooms sector, other non-farm rural employment and manufacturing and mining;
 - ▶ failed to ensure the devolution of functions, functionaries and finances to the panchayats and municipalities, thus limiting the potential for employment generation by elected local bodies;
 - ▶ caused stagnation of investment and growth in small-scale and cottage industry and agriculture, which are the main sources of employment in the country;
 - ▶ generated employment reduction schemes in government services and the public sector;
 - ▶ mounted an ideological assault on the public sector, particularly profitable public enterprises which have been the single-most important avenue of organized employment since Independence;
- **destabilized and lowered growth rates,**
 - ▶ ending the steady rise in growth rates year after year, climaxing in nearly seven per cent annual

growth, which characterised the 1992-97 growth performance,

- ▶ lowered annual average growth over the last five years to much below six per cent, indeed as low as four per cent in two of the five years, accompanied by wild swings in the pendulum of growth;
- **caused acute distress for kisans and khet mazdoors,** leading to an unprecedented number of kisan suicides across the country and growing

THE BJP MONUMEN

destitution among khet mazdoors;

- **weakened national security** by not spending huge amounts of money running into thousands of crores of rupees allocated for modernization of our armed forces;
- **damaged social harmony**
 - ▶ by deliberately inciting a communal carnage in Gujarat;

- ▶ by glorifying violence against missionaries;
- ▶ by encouraging viciously communal and fascist organizations like the VHP/Bajrang Dal to spread hate;
- **subverted school curricula** by rewriting history books to spread religious hatred and eroded the autonomy of prestigious intellectual institutions by taking away their professional independence;
- **destroyed probity** in administration by

/NDA'S TAL FAILURES

encouraging corruption and fomenting scams in defence, telecom, DDA, allotment of petrol pumps, stock markets and UTI;

- **denigrated key institutions** of parliamentary democracy like the CAG, NHRC, CEC, PAC and the CVC whenever their reports have indicted the

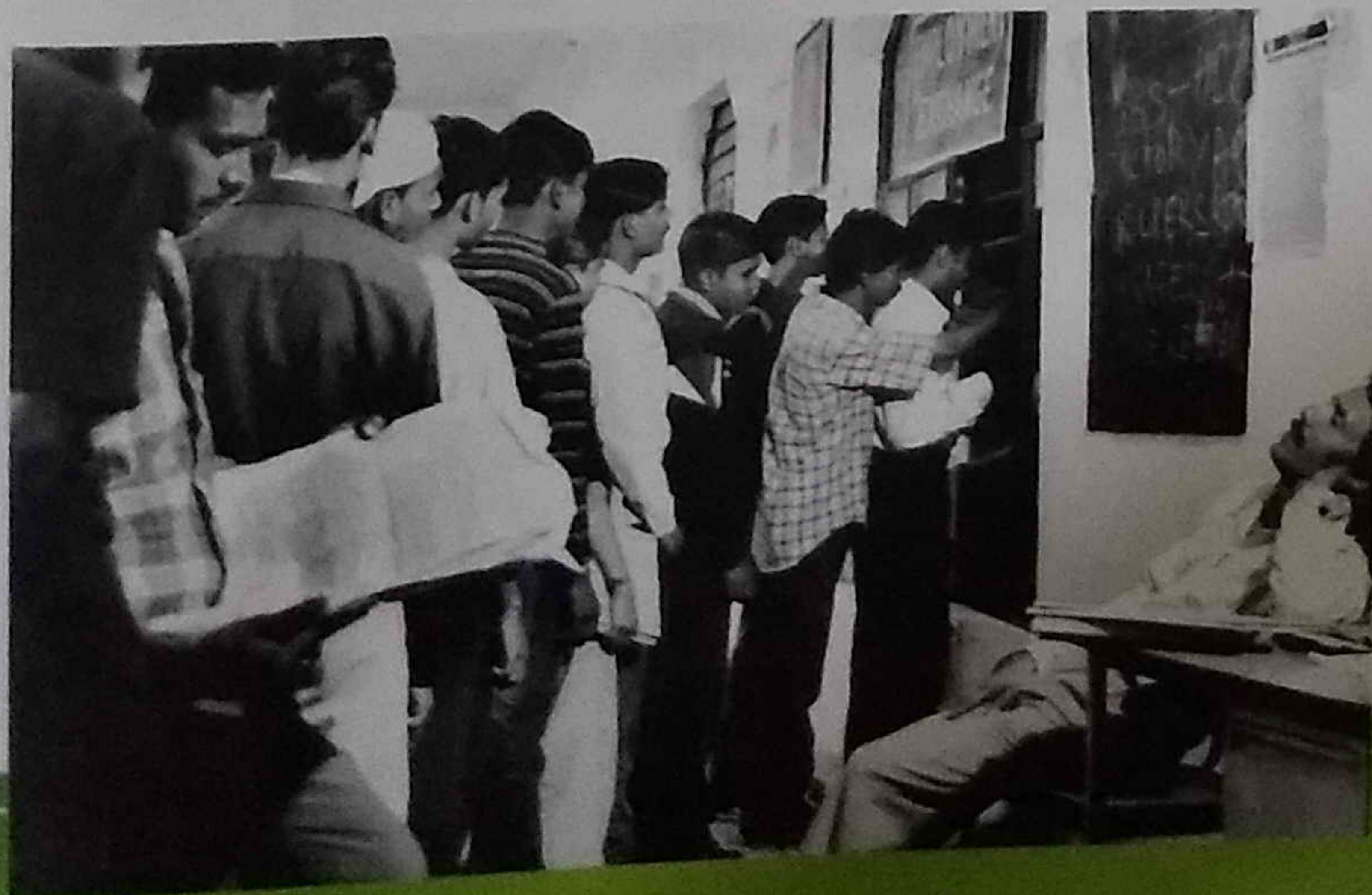
government for its corruption and inefficiency and grossly misused the CBI;

- **undermined the independence of our foreign policy** by not speaking up forcefully against the marginalisation of the United Nations, by not asserting India's position on world issues effectively and by constant flip-flops in our relations with Pakistan.

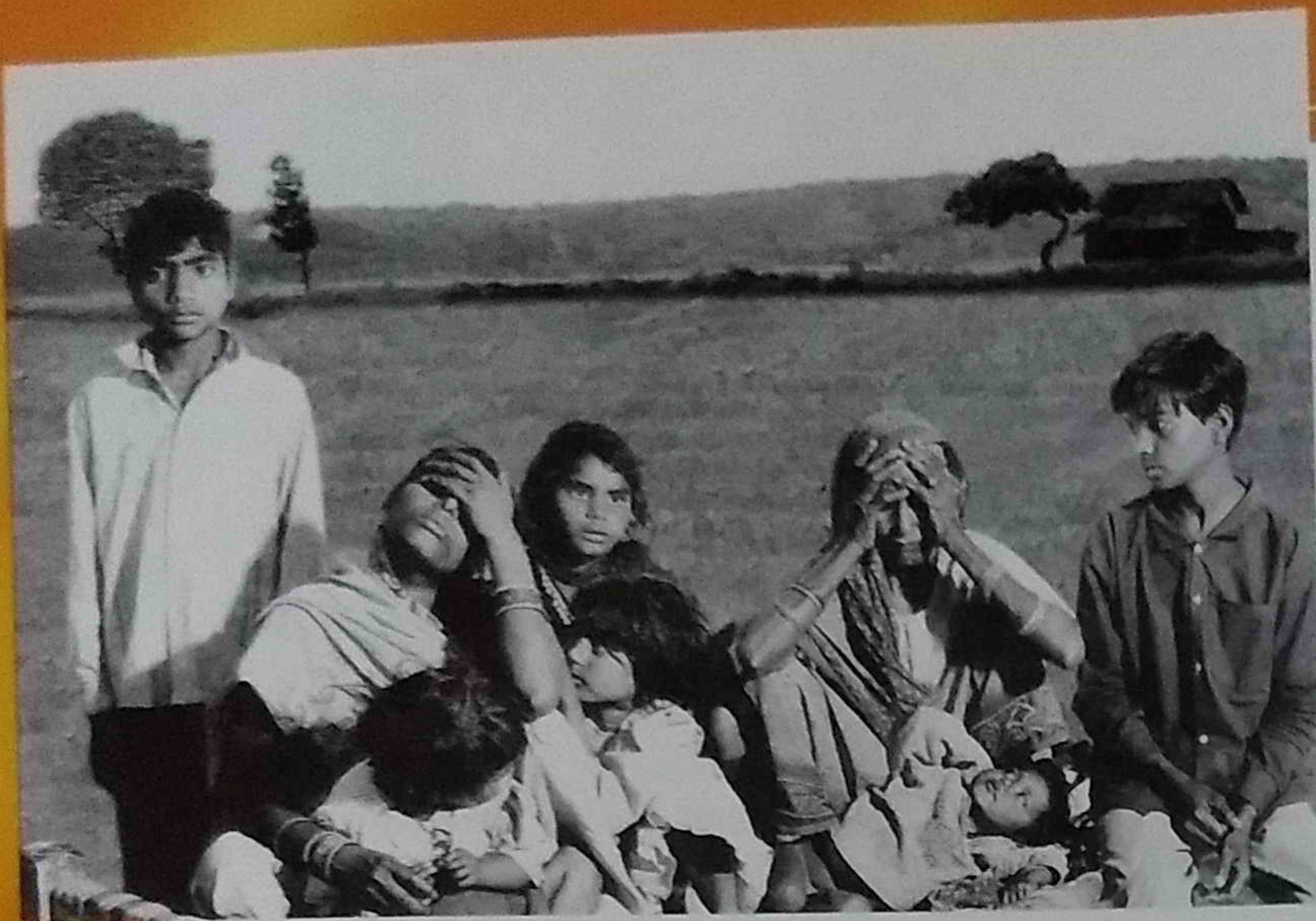
The Prime Minister has displayed a singular lack of consistency and clarity on major national issues. On every major national issue, he has indulged in double-speak, whether it be

- ▶ Ayodhya and on the preservation of secularism;
- ▶ the carnage in Gujarat;
- ▶ relations with Pakistan;
- ▶ negotiations with different groups in Jammu and Kashmir;
- ▶ and links with the RSS.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister took office notwithstanding his being arraigned before a court of law and the Liberhan Commission for his role in the demolition of the Babri Masjid. He has presided over shocking security lapses in the nation's capital and elsewhere. Four years ago, he grandly announced that he would come out with a White Paper on ISI Activities in India.



Congress Ka Haath
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Till today, the nation is waiting for that expose. It is a matter of record that most of the serious terrorist attacks in the past three-four years have not been investigated by the Home Ministry and accountability fixed, while the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister keep on chanting their firm resolve to combat the menace of terrorism at all costs — a resolve that is completely hollow.

The External Affairs Minister personally escorted three hard-core terrorists to safety to Kandahar in Afghanistan. These terrorists then continued their wanton killings of innocent men, women and children in J&K. Recently, the former head of Pakistan's ISI has admitted that the terrorist escorted by Shri Jaswant Singh to Kandahar masterminded the attack on our Parliament on December 13, 2001.

The BJP is going to the polls on a so-called "feel good" factor. This is bogus. The reality is that under Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the average annual rate of economic growth is lower than in the 1980s and much lower than during 1992-96 when the Congress was in power. The rate of both public and private investment has declined over the period that the BJP-led NDA

government has been in office. It is this lack of investment demand that has caused the build-up of foreign exchange reserves and that has resulted in the fall in interest rates both factors identified by the BJP as its "achievements". Moreover, low interest rates have benefited borrowers but have enormously hurt the interests of crores of savers and bank depositors who have seen their valuable savings dwindle in value. The BJP claims that its highway development programme implemented by the National Highway

THE BJP MONUMEN

Authority of India (NHAI) is unprecedented. The truth is that the NHAI was established by the Congress government in 1995. Most of the plans had been finalized before the Congress demitted office. All that the BJP-led NDA government has done is turn the national highways already built by the Congress governments of the past, into express highways. Moreover, the new highways being built are not free; they can be used only after payment. Highways built under earlier Congress regimes

during 1950-90 were all free and anybody could use them.

It was during the term of the BJP-led NDA government that the stock market and UTI scams took place, as detailed by the Joint Parliamentary Committee that has fixed the eighteen months commencing from the swearing in of the NDA government in October 1999 as the period of the scams. The scams wiped out the hard-earned savings

boycotted by the Opposition for this gross impropriety.

The BJP and its cohorts orchestrated the horrific communal carnage in Gujarat after the tragic events at Godhra. The RSS is indicted in most commissions of inquiry into communal riots. The Supreme Court has pulled up the Gujarat government repeatedly for its complicity in the communal carnage of 2001. On this count alone, the people of India must reject the BJP.

The BJP has fostered corruption to an unprecedented degree with scams after scams being revealed. On this count too, the people of India must reject the BJP.

The BJP's economic policies have sharpened the divide between the rich and the poor, between the fortunate few and the disadvantaged many, between rural and urban India, between different regions of the country. On this count also, the people of India must reject the BJP.

of crores of middle class families, senior citizens, pensioners and widows. The epicentre of the scams lay in cooperative banks based in the constituencies of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

A video film showed the BJP President and other NDA leaders taking bribes. The Defence Minister who resigned in the wake of this expose saying he would not return till his name was cleared rejoined office while the enquiry was on and has been

The BJP is using the NDA as a mask. Hiding behind the façade of the NDA, the BJP is misleading the people of our country. It has not given up its divisive agenda. This is one more count on which the people of India must reject the BJP.

/NDA's TAL FAILURES



Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath



Change with Continuity

Congress policies have always been anchored in a vision of an economically prosperous, socially just, politically united and culturally harmonious India. These policies have never been reduced by rote to a mindless doctrine or empty dogma or simplistic *mantra*. The Congress has always created space for change. It has always been pragmatic. It has always been ready to respond to new challenges. In consequence, steadfastness to basic principles has never impeded responsiveness to new requirements.

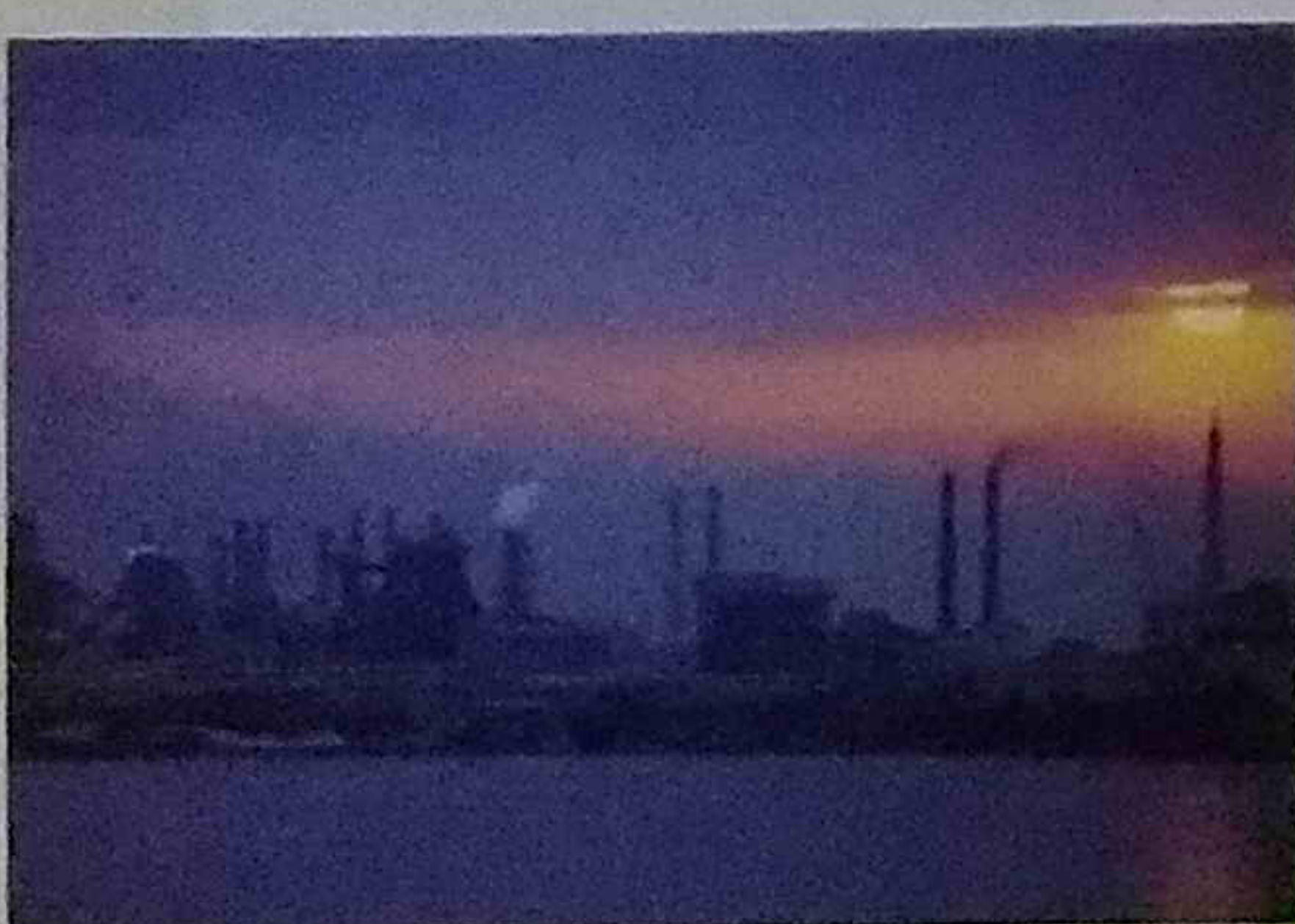
The 1950s needed land reforms, community development, the public sector and the building of agricultural, industrial, irrigation, educational, scientific and other infrastructure. The Congress ensured that this happened.

The 1960s and 1970s needed a direct attack on poverty, a whole new approach to agricultural growth and rural employment, the exploration and exploitation of domestic sources of oil, and the nationalization of banks to meet the requirements of not just big business houses but also give priority to farmers, weavers, cottage industries and small industries and traders, as also to fulfill social needs and aspirations. The Congress ensured that all this happened.

The 1980s needed renewed emphasis on science and technology to solve the problems of the people, and the modernization of industry to ready India to meet the new challenges of the 21st century. It also required India to be ushered into the electronics, computers and telecommunications age in a significant way. The Congress ensured that this happened.

THE CONG PRIORITI AND PRO

The 1990s needed bolder economic reforms and liberalization and a much larger role for the private sector to accelerate growth and promote India's integration into a rapidly-changing world economic system. A redefinition of the role of government in economic development, including Constitutionally-sanctioned Panchayati Raj Institutions and municipalities to





function as units of local self-government was also needed. The Congress ensured that this happened.

The Congress makes a solemn commitment to the people of India: to restore peace among all of its peoples, to strengthen the secular order through emphasis on social harmony, cultural

RESS PARTY'S ES, PLANS GRAMMES

pluralism and respect for the rule of law, and to ensure a bright and secure economic future for every family in our country.

THE LAW OF THE LAND WILL BE ENFORCED WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR TO ENSURE THAT SOCIAL HARMONY AND COHESION IS MAINTAINED

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THERE WILL BE NO COMPROMISE ON THIS.

Six Basics

The Congress's six basics for governance:

- Samajik Sadbhavna, to ensure social cohesion and harmony by taking the strictest possible action against those who promote bigotry and hatred;
- Yuva Rozgar, to accelerate growth of productive and secure employment opportunities increase by around one crore a year and ensure that each family has at least one job;
- Grameen Vikas, to improve the income and welfare of kisans and khet mazdoors across the country;
- Arthik Navotthan to unleash the creative energies of our professionals and entrepreneurs, the cutting edge of our middle class;
- Mahila Sashaktikaran, to provide for the political empowerment and full educational, economic and legal equality for women;
- Saman Avsar, to provide for equality of opportunity in every way for dalits, adivasis, OBCs and religious and linguistic minorities.

These six priorities constitute the foundation of all policies of the Congress.



Congress Ka Haath
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The Congress has consistently maintained that liberalisation and globalisation can be meaningful only if they are aimed at local-level economic and social transformation that directly benefits the poor in rural and urban India, bringing prosperity to the 6 lakh-odd villages of India and improving the living conditions of the urban poor.

The Congress will broaden and deepen economic reforms. The over-riding objective will be to attain and sustain year after year a 8-10% rate of economic growth and to spread this growth over all sectors, particularly agriculture and industry. An annual growth rate of less than 4-4.5% in agriculture and 10% in industry is simply unacceptable.

Rozgar

The priority requirement for accelerated employment generation is to revive economic growth and sustain it across the country at between 8-10% per year for well over a decade. This will be the Congress's overall objective. Faster and broad-based economic growth is an essential pre-requisite for accelerating employment generation. The Congress will also adopt policies to expand employment in the organized sector, which has fallen precipitously

in the last five years. Fiscal incentives to promote employment-intensive growth will be introduced.

Continued growth in agriculture will create new employment opportunities. This is particularly so in the central, eastern and northeastern regions of the country which have still to realize their full agricultural potential. New jobs will also

THE CONG PRIORITI AND PRO

be created in other areas of rural development like horticulture, aquaculture, afforestation, dairying and agro-processing. These need and will be provided new investment, credit, marketing and technology inputs. A stable long-term export policy for agricultural products and commodities will be announced.





The Congress will revamp the functioning of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) so as to make it a modern, research-based, technology-driven, customer-focussed organization. New programmes for the modernization of the coir industry, handlooms, powerlooms, handicrafts, food processing, sericulture, wool development, leather, pottery,

GRESS PARTY'S ES, PLANS GRAMMES

etc., will be launched.

A national Employment Guarantee Act will be enacted immediately. This will provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment on asset-creating public works programmes every year at minimum wage, for every rural household.

A greater thrust on labour-intensive exports of

textiles, handicrafts, gems and jewelry, leather, software, engineering and consumer goods will also significantly boost employment. The textile industry will receive special focus in view of the increased competition in world markets from January 2005 as mandated by the WTO.

The concerns of small-scale industry like shortage of working capital, lack of technology and marketing, delayed payments, harassment by inspectors will be addressed expeditiously. A cluster approach to the development of small-scale industry will be adopted.

Along with vastly expanded credit facilities for self-employment, the services industry will be given all support to fulfill its true employment potential. This includes not just software and IT-enabled services, not just trade, distribution and transport, not just financial and telecommunications services but also tourism. Special infrastructural facilities for substantially expanding international and domestic tourism will be created. Reforms of laws and regulations that stand in the way of growth of the services industry will be undertaken.

The Congress will also establish a National Commission to monitor the functioning of enterprises in the informal sector, the problems



Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath



they face in access to technology, credit and markets and recommend corrective measures on an on-going basis.

To enhance the employability of our youth, systematic efforts will be made to vocationalise secondary education and to establish at least one industrial training institute in each development block of the country through creative public-private partnerships. The employment exchange machinery will be revamped to provide a closer linkage between demand and supply for labour.

As an indicator of how seriously the Congress takes its commitment to employment growth, an annual Rozgar Report to the Nation will be prepared and released on May 1.

Kisans and Khet Mazdoors

The Congress will pursue an Agriculture First strategy in resource allocation. Public investment in agriculture will be stepped up substantially with focus in the backward and poor regions. This will cover irrigation, electrification, godowns, marketing, research and extension.

The entire rural credit system based on cooperatives will be restored to health. The flow of agricultural credit would be doubled in the next three years and the coverage of small and marginal farmers by institutional lending will

also expand substantially. Immediate steps will be taken to ease the burden of debt and high interest rates on farm loans.

A time-bound programme for restoring all public tubewells to good working condition wherever required will be started. The pace of construction of new irrigation wells in the poorer districts of

THE CONG PRIORITI AND PRO

the country will be accelerated.

A special technology and extension programme for dryland farming will be introduced. An intensive agricultural development programme for the 100-odd districts in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country will be put in place. Watershed development projects will be





promoted on a large-scale and the wasteland development programme lying dormant these past few years will be revived.

The agro-processing industry and other agriculture-related activities like dairying, aquaculture, fisheries, horticulture, sericulture will be encouraged through fresh investment,

GRESS PARTY'S ES, PLANS GRAMMES

technology and marketing resources. A renewed emphasis will be placed on wasteland development and afforestation.

While the terms of trade will always be maintained in favour of agriculture, simultaneously steps will be taken to ensure that profitability in agriculture is also increased.

Farmers all over the country will receive fair and remunerative prices and government agencies entrusted with the responsibility for procurement and marketing will pay special attention to farmers in poor and backward states and districts.

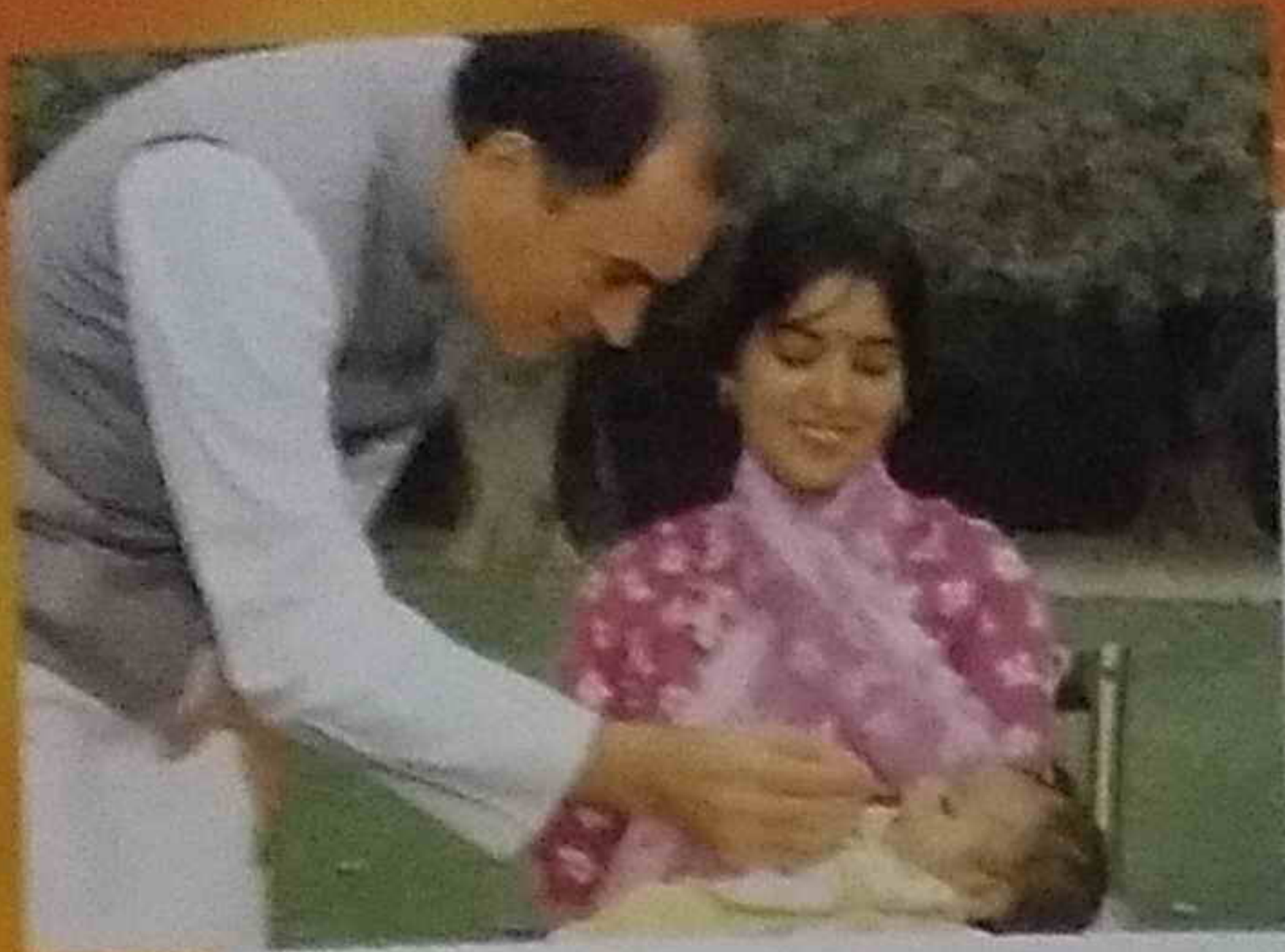
While farm insurance schemes for both crops and cattle will be implemented, the Congress will also examine the feasibility of an Agricultural Stabilisation Fund involving a system of direct support or income support to farmers particularly in the ecologically vulnerable regions of the country.

Controls on the free movement of farm commodities and processing of agricultural products and regulations that depress the incomes of farmers will be systematically removed. Farmers will be given greater say in the organizations that supply inputs to them.

The Congress will ensure the fullest implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labour. Comprehensive protective legislation will be enacted for all agricultural workers. It will redouble its efforts to distribute surplus productive land to the landless. It will also modernize the revenue administration at the local level and start a major national programme to record all titles to land and keep them up-to-date.



Congress Ka Haath
Aam Aadmi Ke Saath



Like it did for panchayats, the Congress will bring forward a Constitutional amendment to ensure the democratic, autonomous and professional functioning of all cooperatives.

Women and Children

The Congress pledges to press for the Constitutional Amendment to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and in Vidhan Sabhas for women.

It will launch a movement for the effective implementation of social legislation such as for minimum age at marriage, anti-dowry, curbing atrocities on women, anti-sati, widow welfare, etc. as well as for minimum wages for enhancing women's welfare. Stern measures will be taken to ensure the elimination of female foeticide and infanticide. Marriage registration will be made mandatory.

30% of all funds flowing into panchayats and nagarpalikas will be earmarked for programmes relating to the development of women and children and focus on the special needs of female agricultural labour and women cultivators. Village women and their associations will be empowered to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water supply, sanitation, primary education and

health, nutrition, biogas, maintenance of water pumps and borewells and farm forestry.

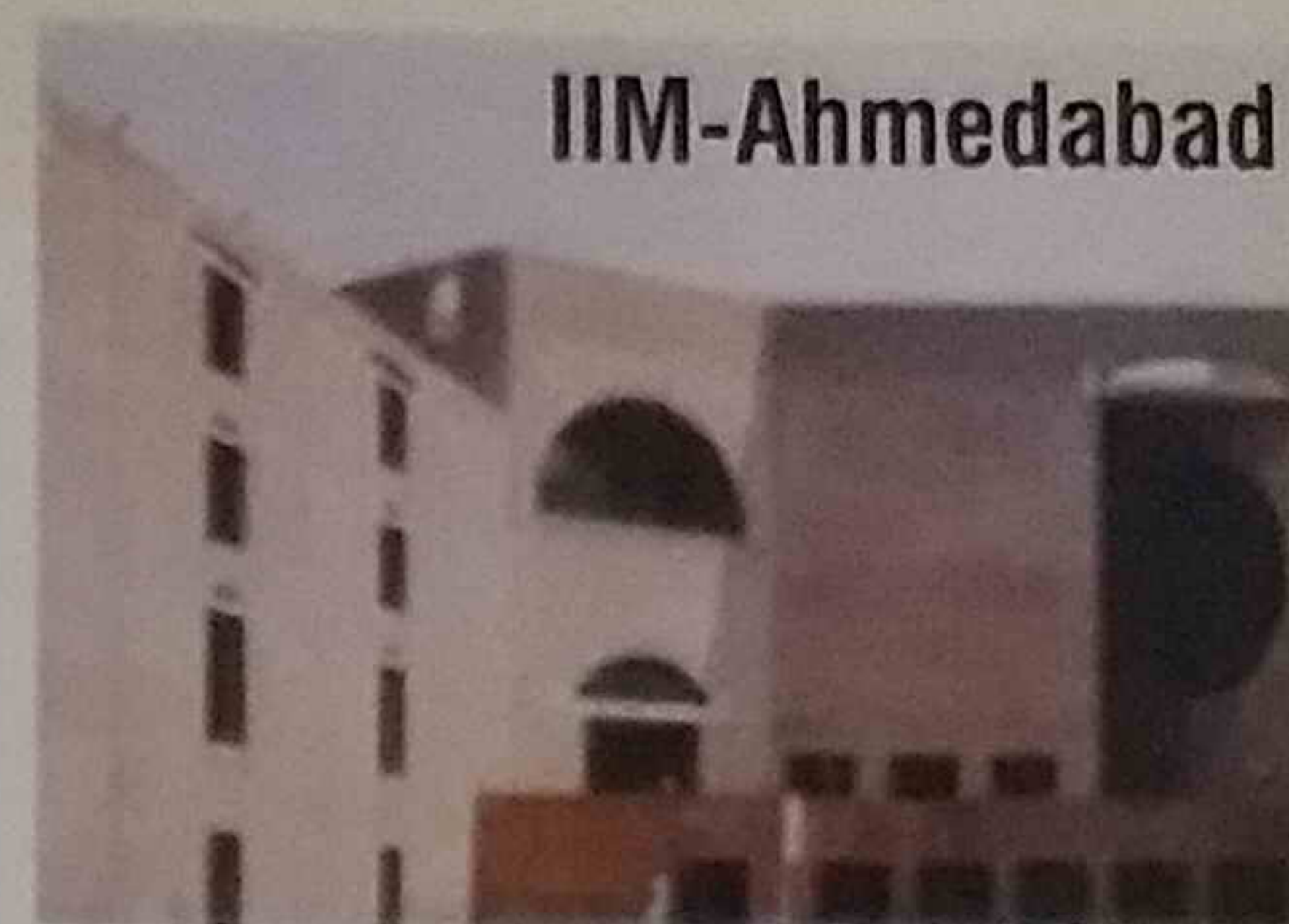
Complete legal equality for women in all spheres will be made a practical reality, especially by removing discriminatory legislation, by giving them equal share in matrimonial property, by protecting their rights to matrimonial homes and

THE CONG PRIORITY AND PRO

'streedhan', by giving them equal rights of ownership of assets like houses and land, etc. All states will be encouraged to set up family courts at the earliest.

There will be a major expansion in schemes for micro-finance based on self-help groups, especially for tribal women, women belonging to





scheduled castes, women below the poverty line, rural women and women in distress, and particularly in the backward and ecologically sensitive regions and actively encourage the functioning of producer and marketing cooperatives.

Some states of India, particularly in the South, have

CONGRESS PARTY'S POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

already reached replacement levels of fertility while other states will do so over this decade. But on present reckoning, four-five states of India will be unable to reach this crucial milestone for decades. The Congress will take the lead in replicating the success of other states in those states where population growth continues unabated. Population planning is not just a government programme but

must become a movement of civil society as well. A sharply targeted mobilization effort will be mounted in the 150-odd districts that still have unacceptably high levels of fertility.

Education and Health

The Congress pledges to raise public spending in education to at least 6% of GDP with at least half of this amount being spent in primary and secondary schools. A cess will be proposed on all central taxes to finance the commitment to universalize access to quality basic education. A National Commission on Education will be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes for compliance with national priorities.

The Congress will ensure that all institutions of higher learning in science, technology, social sciences and management will retain the sense of autonomy that they have enjoyed in previous Congress regimes. Academic excellence and professional competence would be the sole criteria for all appointments to bodies like the ICHR, ICSSR, UGC, NCERT, etc.

The Congress will ensure that nobody is denied education, including in institutions of excellence, because he or she is poor. Apart from increasing the supply of loan scholarships and refinance through banks, it will also establish a Education



**Congress Ka Haath
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Development Finance Company along the lines of HDFC to provide loans at affordable rates to all those who cannot afford the costs of college and university education in science, engineering and medicine. Education at all stages would be free in all respects for boys and girls belonging to dalit and adivasi communities.

A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme will be introduced in primary and secondary schools across the country. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) will be universalized to provide for a functional anganwadi in every settlement and full coverage, especially children below age of six.

The Congress will raise public spending on health to at least 2-3% of GDP, with the focus on primary health care over the next five years and to around 5% of GDP over the next decade.

Some state governments administered by the Congress have introduced innovative health insurance programmes. A national scheme of health insurance for families living below the poverty line will be proposed.

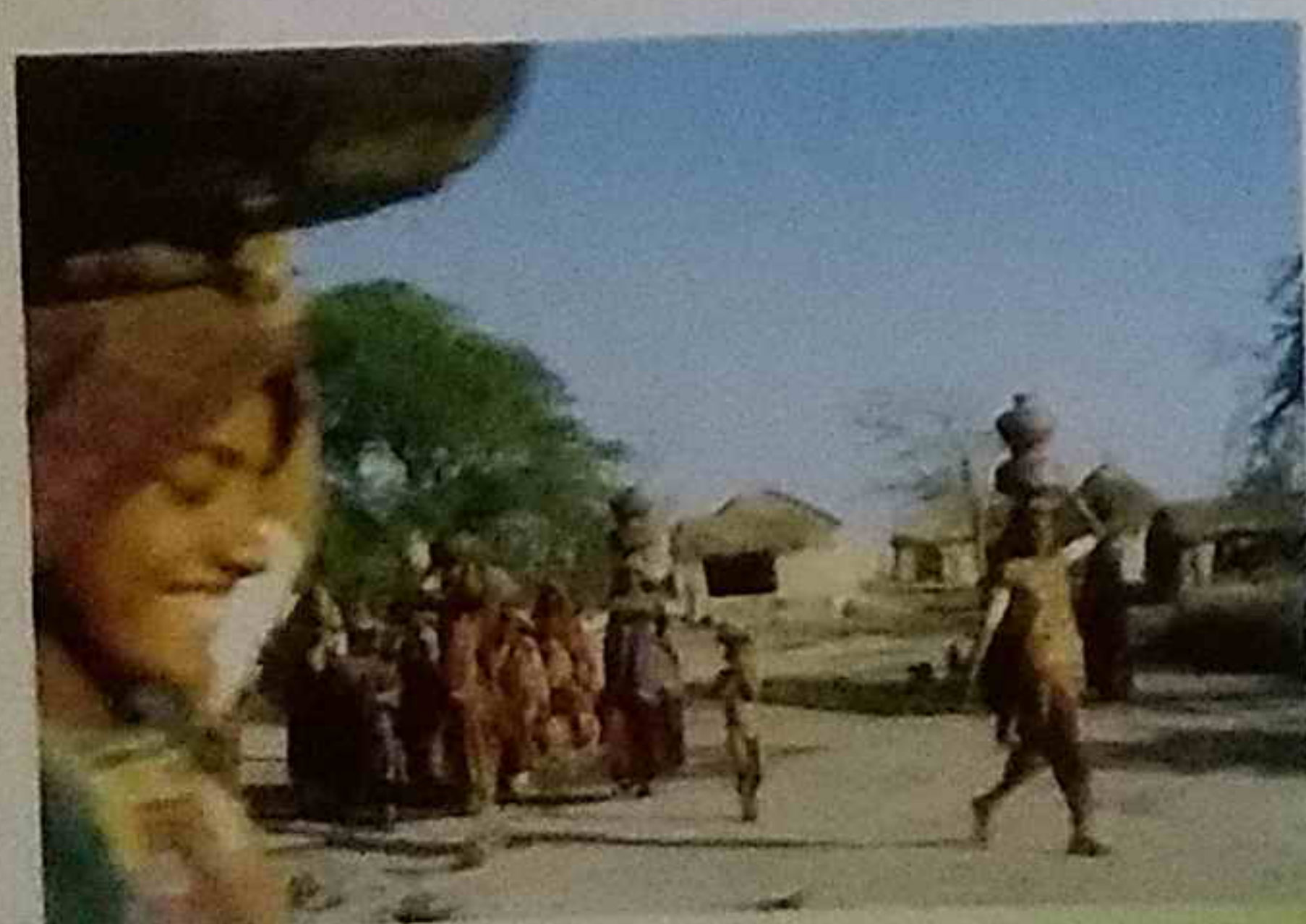
The Congress will introduce a new community-anchored health worker scheme and implement it with the involvement of people's organizations and panchayati raj institutions.

Minorities

The Congress believes in affirmative action for all religious and linguistic minorities. The Congress has provided for reservations for Muslims in Kerala and Karnataka in government employment and education on the grounds that they are a socially and educationally backward class. The Congress is committed to adopting

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this policy for socially and educationally backward sections among Muslims and other religious minorities on a national scale. The Congress also pledges to extend reservations for the economically deprived persons belonging to communities that are at present not entitled to such reservations.





The Congress will adopt all possible measures to promote and maintain communal peace and harmony, especially in sensitive areas. It will enact a comprehensive law on social violence in all its forms and manifestations, providing for investigations by a central agency, prosecution by Special Courts and payment of uniform compensation for loss of life,

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honour and property.

The Congress commits itself to amending the Constitution to establish a Commission for Minority Educational Institutions that will provide direct affiliation for minority professional institutions to central universities. Special steps will be taken to spread modern and technical

education among women in minority communities particularly.

New middle-level technical institutions will be started in places where for example, weavers and artisans are concentrated. The National Minorities Development Corporation and State Minorities Development Corporations will be made direct-lending institutions.

On the Ayodhya issue, the Congress's stand has been very clear. All parties must wait for and abide by the verdict of the courts. If negotiations are to be held, they must be between the parties to the dispute. And the Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1992 which freezes the status of all disputed sites other than Ayodhya as of August 15, 1947 must be strictly enforced.

Dalits and Adivasis

The Congress will create a national consensus on the issue of dalits and adivasis getting a reasonable share of jobs in the private sector. A dialogue with private industry will be initiated to identify how best Indian industry could fulfill in tangible measure the aspirations of youth, especially those belonging to the weaker sections of society.

Determined efforts will be made to promote a culture of entrepreneurship among the dalits and adivasis by providing businesses run by them with



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preferential treatment in government procurement and by extending bank credit at affordable terms.

State governments will be urged to make legislation for conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce on adivasis particularly who work in forests.

All reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. Special recruitment drives particularly for Class I and II vacancies will be launched.

A comprehensive national programme for minor irrigation of all lands owned by dalits and adivasis will be introduced. Landless families will be endowed with some land through the proper implementation of land ceiling and land redistribution legislation.

There is need to reconcile the objectives of faster economic growth and environmental conservation as far as tribal communities dependent on forests are concerned. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 has prevented a wholesale loss of forests. At the same time, concerns have been raised that in its implementation rigidities have developed depriving tribal communities the benefits of economic growth. These concerns have to be

recognized and addressed in an ecologically sustainable manner. In addition, there is need to put in place more effective systems of relief and rehabilitation for tribal communities displaced by development projects.

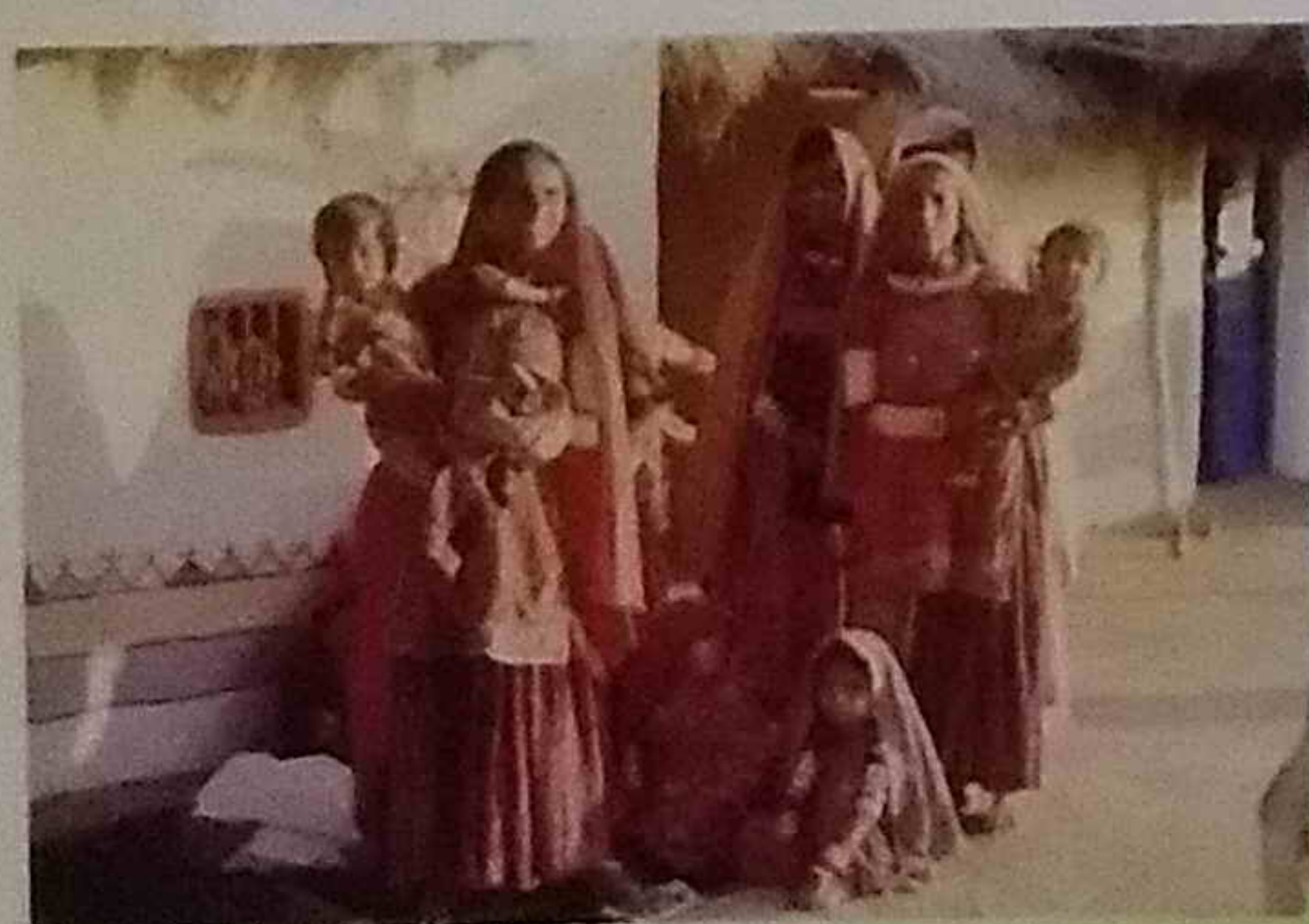
Taking note of the growing unrest in tribal areas in various states, the Congress will have a fresh

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look at development strategies for tribal areas and work out new designs of sustainable livelihoods. Income accruing to the government from forest will be earmarked as additional assistance for programmes of tribal development.

Food and Nutrition Security

Over the past few years, there has been far too





much tampering with the public distribution system (PDS) that provides the basis for extending food security to crores of Indians. Because people are buying less foodgrain from ration shops, huge foodgrain stocks have been built up. The Congress will strengthen the PDS particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country and also involve women's and ex-servicemen's

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cooperatives in its management at the local level. While the focus of the PDS will be on below-the-poverty line (BPL) families, surveys to identify such families will be conducted every two years by panchayats based on transparent and verifiable criteria such as land ownership, occupation, family status, etc.

About 6-8% of our population comprising the most destitute and infirm do not have access to the PDS even where the PDS works well. Special schemes to reach foodgrains to this section through panchayats will be launched. Antyodaya cards for all households at risk of hunger will be introduced. Grain banks in chronically food-scarce areas will be established.

It is a matter of great shame that even today over a third of babies born in India are under-weight reflecting acute malnourishment of the girl child who later becomes a mother. Nutrition programmes for the girl child particularly will be expanded on a significant scale.

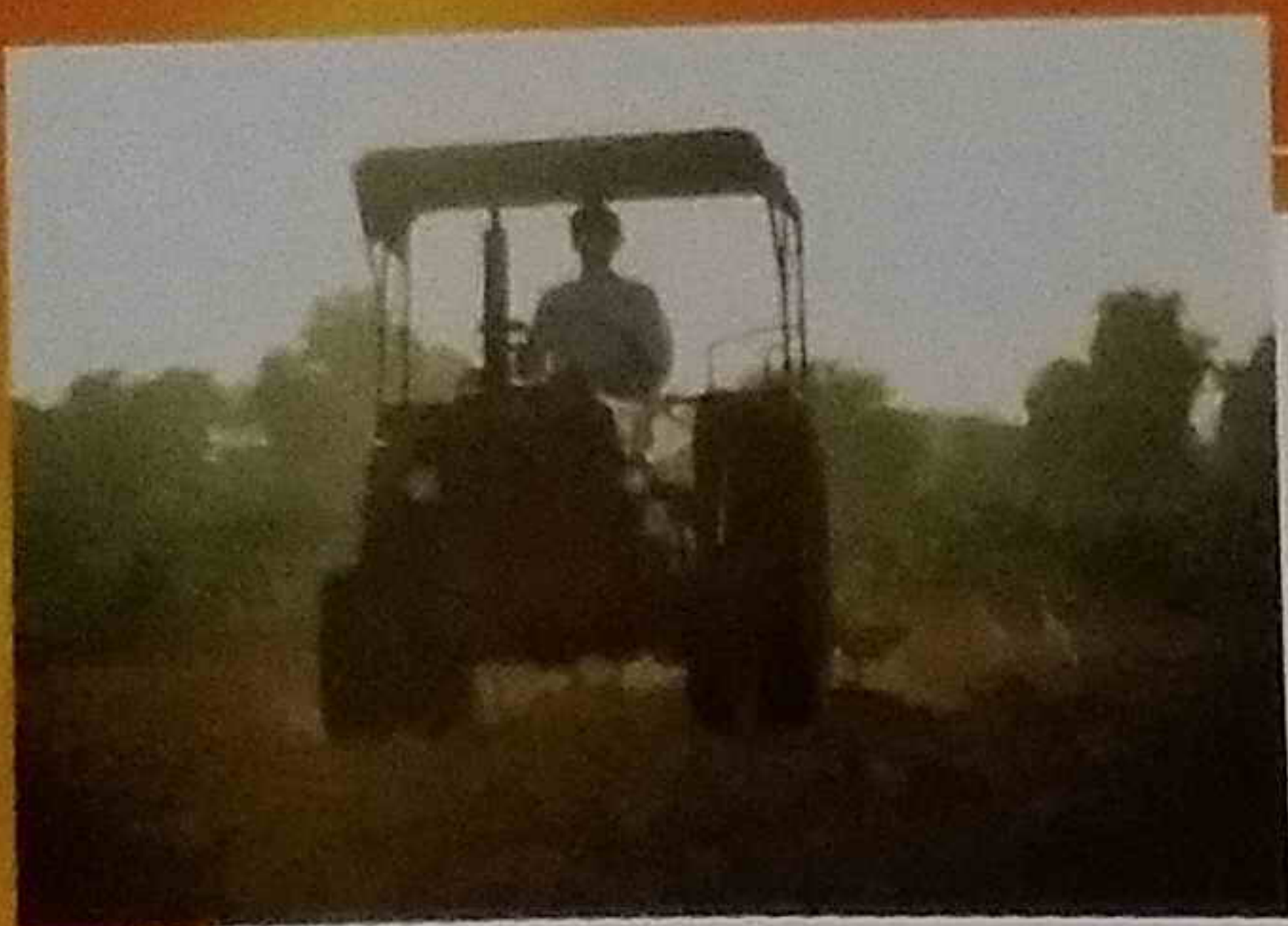
Panchayati Raj

Panchayat bodies that got Constitutional sanction a decade ago because of the vision and relentless zeal of Rajiv Gandhi, now need full devolution of funds, functions and functionaries. Globalisation and economic reforms must be based on strong, effective and empowered institutions of local self-government.

The Congress will ensure that all funds for poverty alleviation and rural development programmes will be credited directly to panchayat bodies. The Gram Sabha will be empowered to emerge as the foundation of the panchayati raj



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system. Appropriate audit systems would be established to ensure sound financial administration at the local level.

Informal and Unorganised Sector

Almost 93% of the workforce in our country is in the unorganized sector. While every initiative must and will be taken to expand the proportion of employment in the organized sector, the Congress will ensure the well-being and welfare of all workers in the unorganized sector. Some Congress state governments have already taken significant steps in this area but a renewed national effort is now needed with focus on social insurance and health support. Special social security schemes started by earlier Congress governments for workers in the unorganized sector like weavers, handloom workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, beedi workers, etc., will be expanded.

The Congress will establish a National Commission to examine problems facing enterprises operating in the unorganized sector. The Commission will be asked to make appropriate recommendations to provide technical, marketing and credit support to these enterprises. A National Fund will be created for

this purpose. A single, simplified law will be enacted to set out the obligations of these enterprises to labour and for safety. Appropriate social security measures will be devised to protect the workers in the unorganized sector against the risks of ill-health, unemployment and old age.

The Congress will create legal space in the cities

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and towns for hawkers, vendors, food-sellers and all such informal sector service activities that enrich urban life, so that they are spared the risk of extortion, eviction, confiscation and harassment.

Social and Physical Infrastructure

Public-private partnerships will form the basis of



infrastructure expansion. Among other things, this could take the form of public expenditure and private management. Subsidies in the provision of infrastructure will be made explicit and provided through the budget of the central and state governments.

The railways have suffered immensely over the

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past few years with rail safety being a prime casualty. The Congress will move purposefully to modernize the vast railway network, keeping both the economic and social dimensions of the railways in mind.

The Congress will vastly accelerate the development and use of the country's irrigation

potential. By 2020, the presently known irrigation potential must be harnessed, for which long-term commitments of funds will be made. But even after this, two-fifths of cultivated area will still be rain-fed, particularly in central India with the bulk of India's tribal population. The Congress and its partners will prepare and implement, on a much larger scale, plans for these regions.

The Congress will launch a special programme so as to ensure each household will have full access to reliable power in the next three to five years. The Congress will use India's foreign exchange reserves creatively to significantly expand the existing public investment programme in power generation so as to add at least 6000-8000 MW of generating capacity every year. The public sector has a crucial role to play in power generation even as the private sector takes on an increased role in power distribution.

In order to supplement water availability and recharge the country's groundwater resources, a local community-based National Rainwater Harvesting Programme will be launched to capture at least an additional 1% of India's rain resources every year.



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The Congress commits itself to work out a comprehensive programme of urban renewal based on public-private partnerships. This will lay particular emphasis on the modernization of urban transport, water supply and sanitation and control of pollution. Municipal administration will be revived and made financially self-sustaining.

Social housing schemes will be launched to meet the needs of the urban poor and to deal with the proliferation of slums. Technologies to promote low-cost housing will be deployed on a large scale.

Defence, National Security and Foreign Policy

The Congress will ensure that all delays in the modernization of our armed forces are eliminated and that funds budgeted for modernization are, in fact, spent to the fullest. The Congress is committed to maintaining a credible nuclear weapons programme while at the same time it will evolve demonstrable and verifiable confidence-building measures with its nuclear neighbours. The welfare of ex-servicemen will occupy urgent attention and plans will be expeditiously prepared for involving them in crucial nation-building tasks. A new Department of Ex-Servicemen's Welfare will be set up in the Ministry of Defence. The long-pending issue of

one-rank, one-pension will once again be re-examined and the satisfactory solution arrived at expeditiously.

The Congress will make the National Security Council a professional and effective institution. It will immediately have a discussion in Parliament on the Subrahmanyam Committee

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report on Kargil and move resolutely to implement its recommendations to strengthen our intelligence networks.

The Congress has been consistent, unlike the BJP, on the issue of dialogue with Pakistan on all issues including Jammu and Kashmir. It has always advocated formal and informal talks on





the basis of the historic Shimla Agreement of 1972. At the same time, the Congress is firm in its view that Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism must end completely once and for all. If it continues, then the Indian state has the responsibility to protect its citizens.

The Congress will expand trade and investment

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relations with China and with countries of East Asia. It will revive the country's close ties with West Asia and other non-aligned countries. It will reaffirm our traditional bonds with countries like Russia, Japan and the European Union. It will engage the United States in scientific, technological, strategic and commercial cooperation. It will take the leadership to strengthen SAARC and launch

major regional projects in areas like energy and water that will bring benefits to all countries of our region.

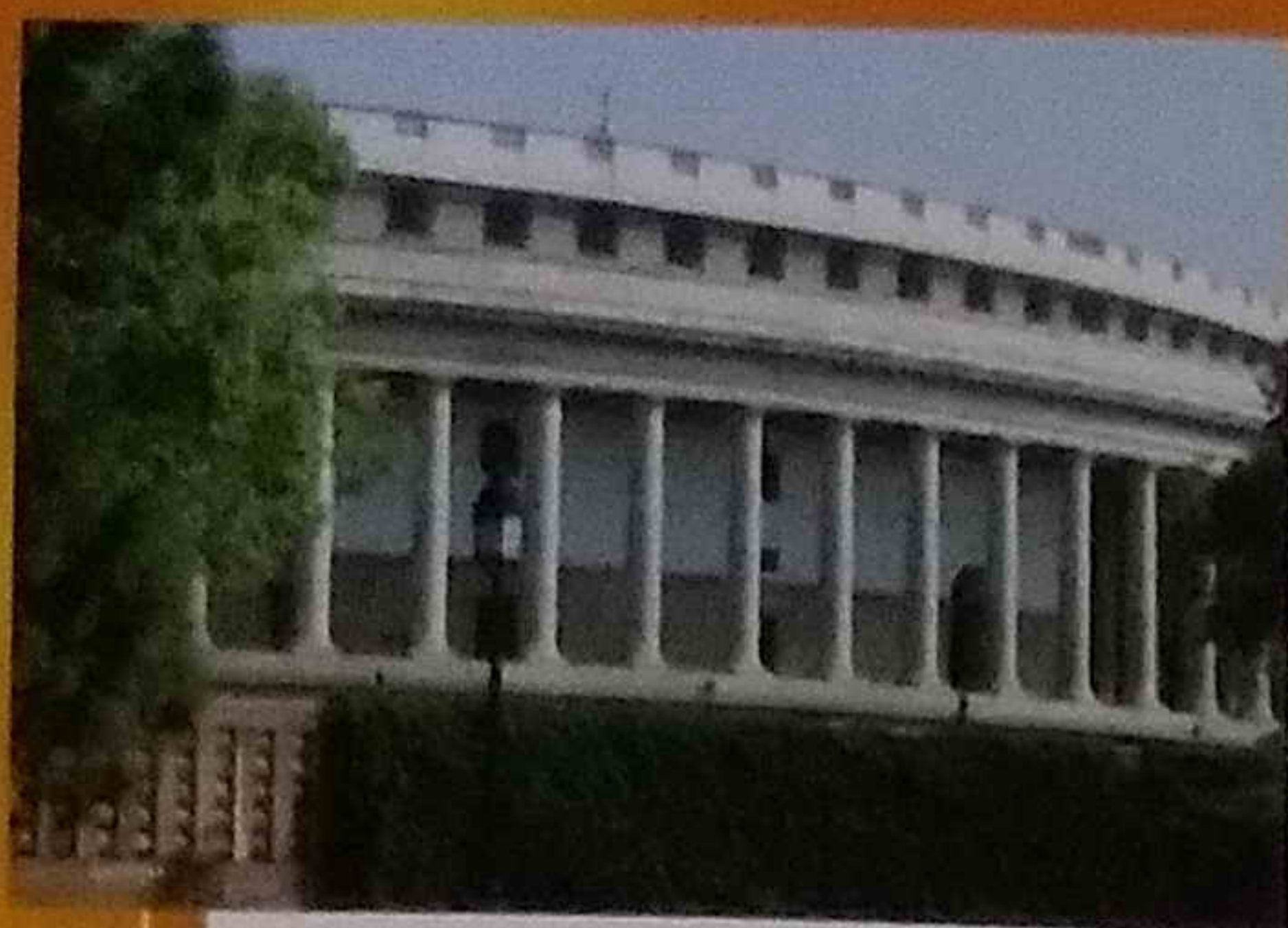
Regional Development

As always, the Congress will work for balanced regional development. India's northeast demands and will receive special treatment with particular emphasis on roads, power, tourism, communication and handicrafts. Without the restoration of law and order and a firm approach to combating militancy, no development can be sustained in the northeast. The northeast will emerge as a gateway to East Asia with which India is building new economic relationships. The Congress also takes note of growing inter-state disparities that have led to some important states like UP and Bihar to fall behind in social development and economic growth. While state governments have the final responsibility for governance, the central government has still an important role in ensuring that the lagging states improve their performance through fiscal and other policies.

In view of the importance of state-level reforms, the Congress will set up a Systems Reforms Commission to work out, in cooperation with state governments, the details of state-level reforms that are needed to accelerate growth and



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improve the quality of basic social services. A structured and transparent approach to alleviate the burden of debt on states so as to enable them to increase social sector investments will be adopted.

Administrative, Police, Judicial and Electoral Reforms

An Administrative Reforms Commission will be established to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the public administration system completely so as to make it more performance-oriented and accountable. While basic governance is the priority, e-governance will be promoted on a massive scale in areas of concern to the common man particularly, like land records, tax administration, etc.

All government agencies but particularly those that deal with citizens on a day-to-day basis must operate in a responsive and accountable manner. The Right to Information Act at the centre will be made more progressive, meaningful and useful to the public. The monitoring and implementation of the Act will be made more participatory and the penalty clauses regarding delays, illegal denials and other inadequacies relating to the supply of information to the public will be

operationalised soon. Protection will be extended to all "whistleblowers" through statutory means, if necessary.

The police force will function in an impartial, professional, effective and humane manner. The special needs of police families, especially in education and housing, will be taken care of in

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adequate measure. More women will encouraged to join the police force.

Immediate measures will be taken to drastically cut delays in courts, particularly in the High Courts and in lower levels of the judiciary. Legal aid services will be aided. Alternative dispute settlement mechanisms will be strengthened. A





new system of nyaya panchayats will be instituted. The Congress is deeply committed to electoral reforms. It was the first party to set up a committee to review its system of financing to ensure maximum transparency. The report of that committee is in the public domain and the Congress is on the path of its implementation. It

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was the only party to welcome last year's Supreme Court order on disclosure by candidates that was opposed by the BJP and its allies.

The Congress will tackle the root causes of corruption and the generation of black money. To a large extent, deregulation, removal of laws that have outlived their utility or have not

fulfilled their social purpose, transparency in party financing and state funding of elections will help. Even so, the Congress is conscious of the havoc that corruption at all levels adds to the harassment of the common man and is determined to rid the country of this scourge.

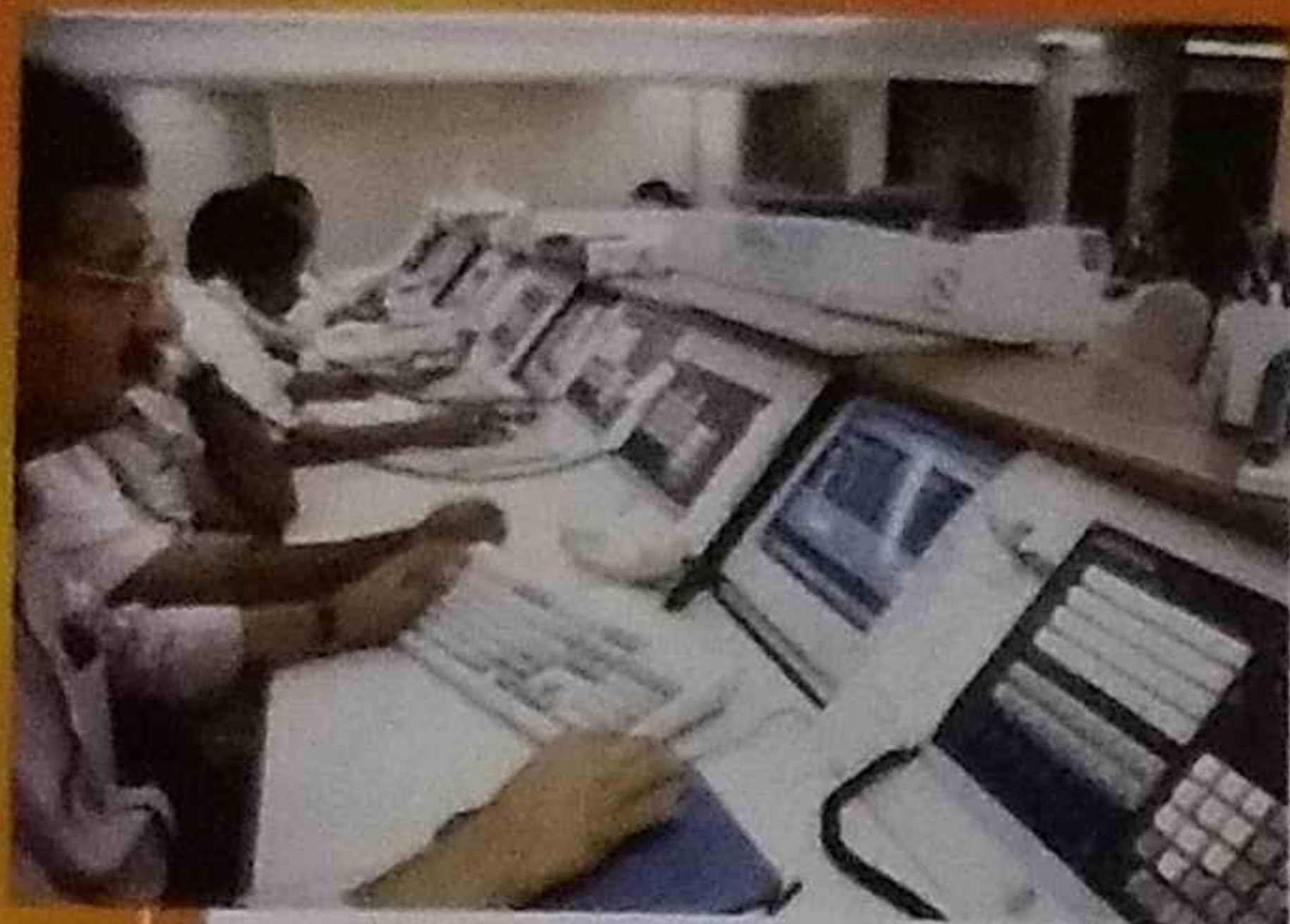
Industry

Revival of industrial growth is of paramount importance. Incentives for boosting private investment will be introduced. The system of approvals of foreign direct investment will be made more transparent. Indian industry will be encouraged in every manner to enhance its global presence. Competition, both domestic and external, will be deepened across industry with professionally-run regulatory institutions in place to ensure that the competition is free and fair. These regulatory institutions will protect the interests of consumers.

The Congress will strengthen the public sector in key, strategic areas, including infrastructure. It will help public sector companies in these areas to emerge as global companies. There is still an important role for the public sector as a venture capitalist in new and emerging areas. Public sector



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companies that can be revived through new management will be identified. The great advantage of the public sector still lies in starting new projects, while the great advantage of the private sector lies in running them commercially. Public-private synergies will be fostered.

The Congress will approach privatization selectively. Disinvestment will not be resorted to merely to raise revenue to meet short-term targets, as the NDA has been doing. Disinvestment revenues will be used for designated social development programmes. The Congress will ensure that disinvestment increases competition and consumer welfare.

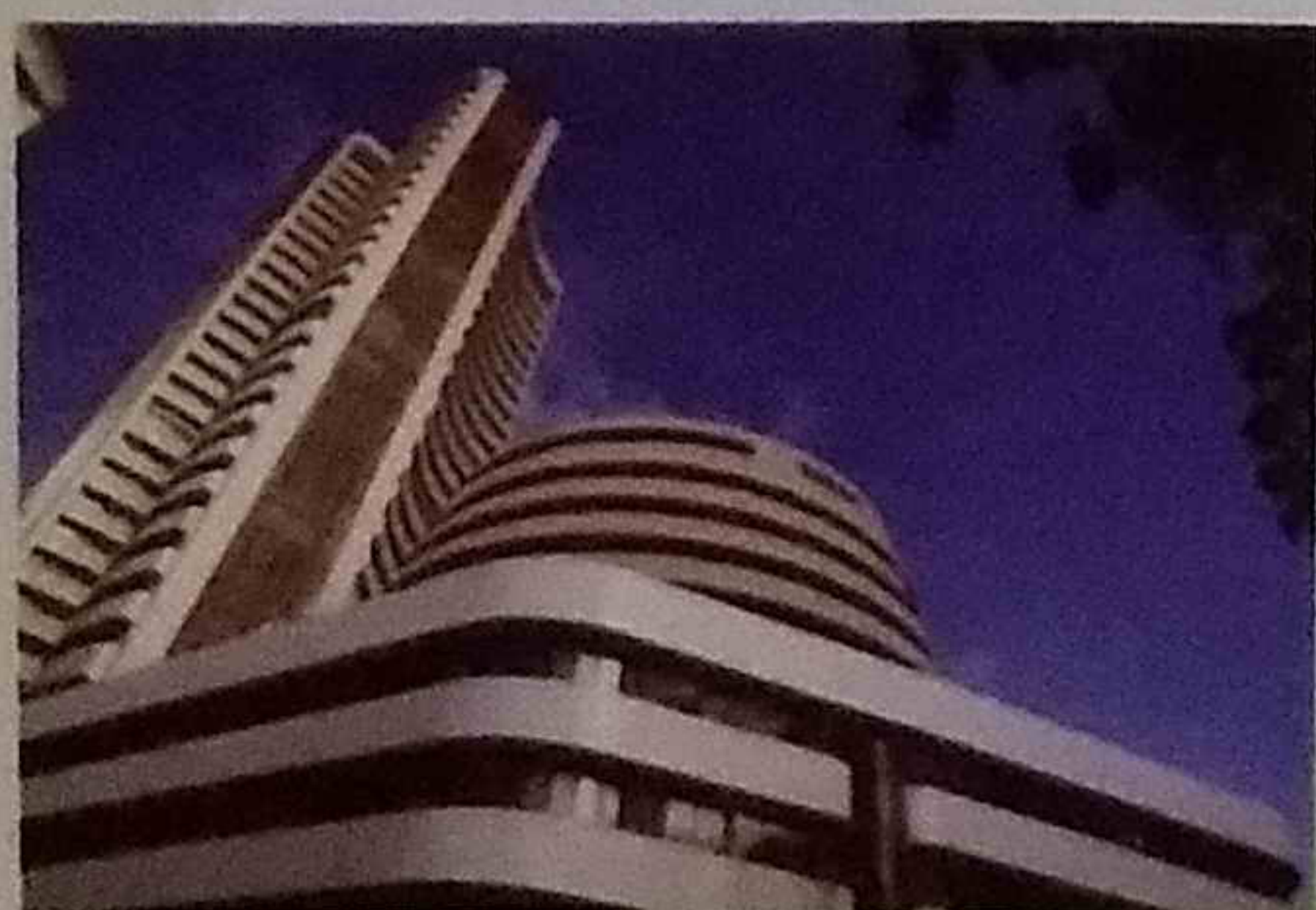
The Congress will establish a National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to provide a continuing forum for policy interactions to energise and sustain the growth of the manufacturing industry like food processing, textiles, engineering, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, leather, capital goods, industrial machinery and IT hardware. A massive push will be given to the applications of IT particularly. Household and artisanal manufacturing

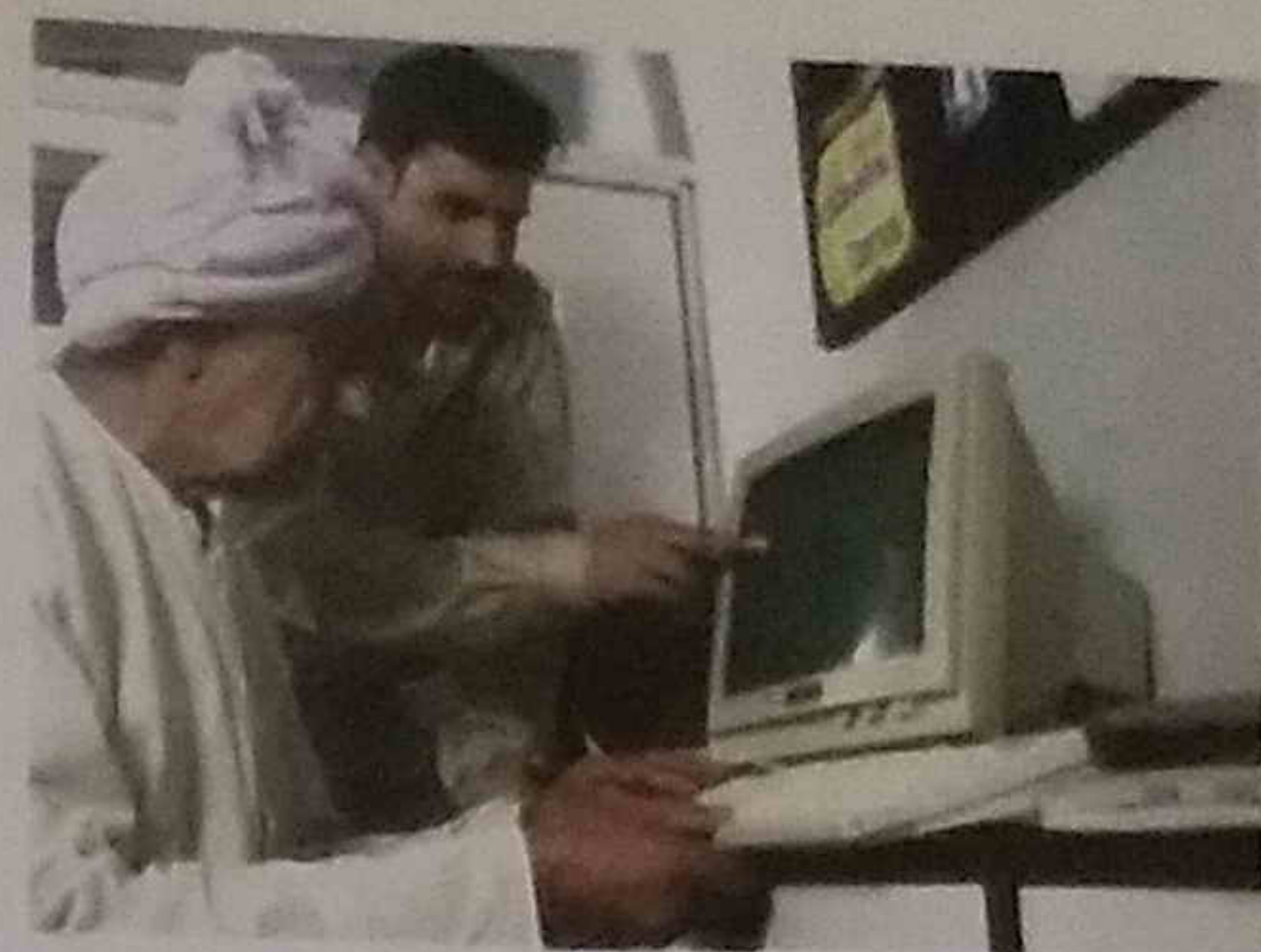
industry that is the lifeline of many towns and cities across the country will be modernized and given greater technological, investment and marketing support.

The Congress is committed to a modern, world-class financial sector that also fulfills

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social objectives. Competition in the financial sector will be expanded. Public sector banks will be given full managerial autonomy. Banks will be encouraged in every way to expand lending, particularly to agriculture, agro-industry, value-added agriculture, small-scale industry and





infrastructure. Interest rates must be such so as to stimulate not just investments but also provide adequate returns to savers.

Fiscal Policy

The Congress reiterates its firm commitment to eliminating the revenue deficit of the central government in five

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years time so as to release more resources for investments in social and physical infrastructure. A detailed roadmap for accomplishing this will be unveiled within 30 days of coming to power so that a national consensus is also created.

The Congress will undertake major

tax reforms to significantly expand the base of taxpayers, to substantially increase tax compliance and to make the tax administration more citizen-friendly. Without increasing tax rates, the Congress believes that the present Tax:GDP ratio of 14-15% must be raised to at least 18% by the end of the decade. VAT will be introduced in close cooperation and consultation with trade and industry. This will enhance the competitiveness of Indian industry and also check tax evasion.

Implementation of Manifesto

Within 100 days of receiving the mandate of the people of our country, the Congress will release a detailed action plan with milestones for governance based largely on the promises and commitments made in this manifesto. Every year on October 2nd, the Congress pledges to present to the people of India a **Jan Dastavejh** on the progress of implementation of the manifesto.



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The Congress approaches the people of India with the utmost humility, conscious of its accomplishments and the many challenges that lie ahead.

A vote for the Congress is a vote for preserving India's many unities and celebrating its many diversities.

A vote for the Congress is a vote for the steady hand of experience and expertise, a vote for compassion in economic policy, for conviction in social policy, for consistency in foreign policy and for clarity in governance and administration.

A vote for the Congress is a vote for a vision of India that has an equal and dignified place for each and every one of its citizens, in which there is equality of opportunity for all to fulfill their aspirations.

The Congress is asking the people of India to vote for it on the strength of the Congress's contributions, its commitments,

AN APPEAL

its concerns and its charter.

The Congress has received the support and trust of the people of India for decades. It has always tried to fulfill that trust in substantial measure.

For economic growth with social harmony, vote Congress.

For economic growth that benefits all sections of our society, and fulfills the aspirations of all Indians, vote Congress.

For economic growth that brings prosperity first and foremost to rural India, vote Congress.

For clarity, conviction, compassion and consistency in governance and administration, vote Congress.

Vote Congress.

Jai Hind



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